



MEDIA RELEASE

Rail & Maritime Transport Union

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New Zealand workers need to use the toilet

Women say they are taking medication to dehydrate themselves because they cannot access a toilet at work.

Today is World Toilet Day, and members of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union say they have been holding on far too long in their wait for safe and secure bathroom access.

“We should all be able to take for granted our right to go to the toilet when we need to,” says Wayne Butson, National Secretary of the RMTU.

“Unfortunately, too many employers do not provide suitable bathroom facilities for their staff.”

At a recent forum for women in the RMTU, attendees shared horror stories about how even when a toilet was provided it was not designed with women in mind.

Male urinals can be found in the women’s bathroom, and in some workplaces there is no female bathroom at all.

In one railway mechanical depot the women’s wash facility is in a separate location to the changing room, forcing women to run the gauntlet in a towel from their workplace shower to the changing room.

Two women recently began employment in a South Island railway workplace that has historically been male dominated.

They discovered to their extreme discomfort they were expected to share the men's toilet and shower facilities, and when the RMTU complained on their behalf the initial response was to offer only a "sanitary bin" for female staff.

"It is incredible that women and men have put up with this issue for so long. If employers are serious about encouraging more women to work in blue collar industries, they need to make women welcome by providing adequate toilet and wash facilities," says Karen Fletcher, RMTU health and safety organiser.

"Expecting people to just pop a squat in the bushes whilst they're working on a railway track is not okay. It's time to do something about it."

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